

The first World War ended in 1919 A.D. with the Treaty of Versailles. The League of Nations was established to avoid the repetition of war and to maintain World Peace. Yet, in a short span of 20 years, the world had to face the Second World War. In these 20 years, many changes took place. After the first World War many important events - occurred which led to the Second World War. Let us learn about these events.

Political Changes in Europe : The First World War had a grave impact on the economies of the European countries. Their economic condition was extremely weak. This added to the difficulties of the common man. Unemployment and inflation became unbearable. The democratic governments of those times failed to improve the condition of the people. As a result, people began to lose faith in democracy. Even while the war was going on the 'Provisional Democratic Government' in Russia fell. A Communist type of government was set up. We have dealt with this topic in the previous chapter. Under the influence of the Russian Revolution, revolutions took place in several other countries of Europe. But, these revolutions were unsuccessful. Even Russia was denied a place in the League of Nations. It did not get Political recognition from America and certain European nations. In spite of this, Russia (U.S.S.R.) became a powerful nation. Consequently, in 1933 A.D. England gave it political recognition. Thereafter in 1934 A.D., it secured the membership of the League of Nations. From the very beginning, Russia had favoured those nations which were struggling for independence.

At the beginning of the 20th century, there took place a change in the feeling of Nationalism and the all pervading Nationalism established its ascendancy. Retired soldiers and army generals encouraged radical Nationalism. They began to participate actively in Politics. Movements for improving the standard of living of the people began at several places. The democratic governments were incapable of reducing human sufferings immediately. Hence, ambitious dictators took advantage of this situation. Fascism succeeded in Italy and a Nazi dictatorship came into power in Germany. During the next few years, dictatorship replaced democracy in several other countries of Europe like Poland, Yugoslavia, Austria and Hungary.

In Europe, dictatorship and communism endeavoured to establish their superemacy over the ideology of democracy. At that time, only two important nations of Europe viz. England and France could stall this tide of dictatorship and communism. The after effects of war had considerably weakened the economies of the two countries. In spite of this, these two countries were successful in sustaining the democratic form of government. They showed to the world that a strong democracy could stand against dictatorship. Let us now learn about the rise and fall of dictatorship in Europe.

The Rise of Fascism in Italy : Factors

The unjust conditions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles : During the First World War, Italy had joined the war as an ally of England. As per the treaty signed after the War, England and France reaped the maximum advantage by waging the war. Italy had hoped to establish its supremacy over the Mediterranean Sea. But it did not succeed in her plans. Thus, Italy did not get either economic benefits or regional gains. Consequently, disappointment prevailed amongst the soldiers and the civilians in Italy. The Italian democratic government failed to take any steps against such an injustice. Hence, the people and soldiers supported the fascist movement.

Economic conditions : During the First World War, Italy had to incur a heavy expenditure. After the War, its economic condition deteriorated to a great extent. Trade and commerce were shredded. The population of the unemployed was increasing rapidly. Starvation was becoming widespread. The government did not take any measures to improve this condition.

Effects of the Communist Revolution in Russia : Communism was spreading rapidly in Russia. This revolution had an immediate impact on the large number of unemployed workers in Italy. Taking advantage of the country's poor economic situation and the dissatisfaction prevailing amongst the masses, the communists began to harp on their significance. By participating in the elections, they held demonstrations against the Government. They incited workers to go on strike and indulge in sabotage. The Government failed to curb their activities.

The people of Italy had awakened to the need to end all their miseries. The masses were in search of a saviour. At that time, the people found their leader in Benito Mussolini. Very soon, Mussolini seized the power and became a dictator.

Benito Mussolini : Mussolini was born in Italy in 1883 in the family of a poor blacksmith. His father held revolutionary ideas. His mother was a teacher. Revolutionary ideas were instilled into him from his childhood. After completing his studies, he worked as a teacher for quite some time. From the very beginning, he was fascinated by the ideology of communism. But later on, he staunchly opposed it. When the war started, he joined the Italian army as a soldier.

Establishment of the Fascist Party : There was a tremendous dissatisfaction amongst the masses on account of the injustice done to Italy, through the Treaty of Versailles. When the government failed to do anything against this injustice, Mussolini formed a group of the dissatisfied soliders, youth, the wealthy and the unemployed. He established the militant nationalist 'Fascist Party' in 1919 A.D. in the city of Milan. They adopted the (fascis) 'bundle of sticks and an axe' as the symbol of their party. This had been the symbol of the supreme power of the Roman Emperor. Because of these 'Fascis', the party led by Mussolini came to be known as the 'fascist'.

party'. The Fascists used to wear black uniform. Hence, they were known as the 'Black Shirts'. The partymen were ready to remove at any cost any hurdle which was against the interests of the party and the country.

The Spread of Fascism : Gradually, the membership and the number of branches of the Fascist Party began to grow. The Fascist Party was defeated in the elections of 1919 A.D. Mussolini, himself was defeated. Yet, before mid 1922 A.D., the Fascist Party had become the most powerful party in Italy. At that time, the Communists went on strike and then the Fascists challenged the government by asking it to either bring the strike under control or hand over the reins of power to them. Mussolini ordered the soliders of his party to march towards Rome. Realizing the turn of the tide, Emperor Victor Emmanuel-III invited Mussolini to form the government. On 30th October 1922 A.D., Mussolini formed a government of the Fascist Party in Italy and took the reins of government in his own hands.

Ideology of Fascism : Mussolini believed that the State is sovereign. An individual exists for the State. An individual does not have freedom over and above the State. Here, everyone is absorbed within the State. The Party believed that the total power of the nation should be wielded by a leader endowed with Divine power. This party was a staunch opposer of democracy and individual freedom and also of communism. Thus Fascism was totally opposed to Democracy.

Internal Achievements of Fascism : Mussolini established a strong and stable government in Italy. He made Italy prosperous and powerful. All the institutions of the State functioned according to the tenets of Fascism. On account of the newly framed economic policy, production increased and the nation's economic progress was rapid. Workers were forbidden to go on strike. Quick measures to develop trade and agriculture were taken. Special campaigns for the eradication of unempolyment and illiteracy were started. By 1935 A.D., only 2 % of the population remained illiterate. The government made Military service compulsory. The Navy was expanded. Thus, a strong Military organisation wedded to fierce nationalism came into being. The end of the 60 years old conflict with the Pope, by treaty was a great achievement of Mussolini. He accepted the power of the Pope in the Vatican City and thereby placated millions of Catholics. With this measure, he gained more popularity.

Nazism in Germany

Towards the end of the First World War, the German army started losing battles. The revolution brought by the people of Germany caused Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm to abandon his Kingdom and flee to Holland (The Netherlands). In 1918 A.D. with the defeat of the German army, the First

World War came to an end. A democratic government was established in Germany. A Communist Republic was set up. Friedrich Ebert, leader of the Social Democratic Party formed the cabinet. But, this democratic government failed, to meet the problems of post war situation and very soon Nazism was born.

Rise of Nazism : Factors

The following factors were responsible for the rise of Nazism in Germany :

The Treaty of Versailles : After the defeat of Germany, the German cabinet was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles. This treaty was very unjust and its terms were harsh as far as Germany was concerned. According to this treaty, Germany was deprived of the majority of portions of the rich mineral areas. German armies were reduced compulsarily. Germany had to pay heavy war indemnities. The treaty made the self-respecting German youth burn with anger. These youths having nationalistic feelings came together to fight to regain Germany's honour and this gave rise to Nazism.

Fear of Communism : The Russian ideology of Communism was spreading very rapidly in Germany. The power of Communist Party in the Republican State had also increased. The Industrialists and Capitalists of Germany were scared of Communism. The Nazi Party was against the Principles of International Communism. The Party declared, "If Communism spreads further in Germany, then the Communist Germany would become a puppet in the hands of Russia." Fearing this, the Capitalists funded the activities of the Nazi Party and helped in the spread of Nazism.

Economic Condition : The economic state of Germany in the post war period, is considered to be the most important factor causing the rise of Nazism. A huge war penalty amounting to £ 660 crore was levied on Germany. Until this penalty was paid, the Ruhrland, which was rich in mineral wealth, was to remain under the control of the French. Germany's economic condition weakened further on account of the expenses of the war. Trade and Commerce had come to a stand-still. Deficit Budgets were prepared. The currency was devalued terribly due to the monetary inflation. The country was on the verge of bankruptcy. At that time, the friends of the nation, especially the U.S.A. provided economic aid to Germany. But, unfortunately, the global depression of 1929-30 A.D. had a great impact on the German economy. The foreign countries stopped giving economic aid. Industries and factories began to close down. And by 1932 A.D., the number of unemployed in Germany reached a stupendous figure of 60 lakh. The Nazi Party took the advantage of the economic dissatisfaction prevailing among the masses. By successful campaigns, the Nazi Party obtained the sympathy of the masses.

The Failure of the Weimar Republic : The Weimar Republic could not solve many problems which had arisen in the post-war period. The German

masses were unhappy about the humiliating treaty. The fear of communism was widespread. The Republican state had failed to resolve the economic crisis. The people wanted a strong government capable of taking prompt decisions. As a result, the Nazi Party was successful in winning the trust of the masses.

The Personality of Hitler : The personality of Hitler was a major factor leading to the rise of Nazism. His speeches worked like magic and the masses looked upon Hitler as their saviour. Fed up with economic poverty and national humiliation, the people accepted the proposals of the Nazi Party.

Adolf Hitler : Before Hitler became the leader of the Nazi Party, he was only a common soldier. He was born on 20th April, 1889 A.D. in a small village of Austria, in a family of commoners. He had been unable to complete his education due to poverty. He came to Vienna in search of a livelihood. There, he worked for a contractor. Leaving this job, he came to Munich. There, he earned his living by painting pictures. During his stay in Munich, the German culture made a deep impact on him. Although an Austrian by birth, he became a worshipper of Germany and its nationalism. When the First World War began, he joined the army. He believed that the German leaders and the Jews were responsible for the German defeat. With the aim of re-establishing the pride of Germany, he entered politics.

The formation of the Nazi Party

Hitler established the Nazi Party by forming a group of the discontented soldiers and called it 'National Socialist Party of German Workers'. At the meeting of the Nazi Party held at Munich in 1920 A.D., Hitler put forth a 25 point programme. It mainly included activities for discarding the unjust treaty of Versailles, reacquisition of the lost territory, building up arms and improving the economic conditions of the workers and the middle class. Hitler strongly criticised the Treaty of Versailles. Hence, the government arrested him and ordered his imprisonment. During his imprisonment, he wrote a book called 'Mein Kampf'. On his release from the prison, the ideology depicted in this book increased the popularity of Nazism. Several units of the Nazi Party were started throughout the country. The members of the party used to wear blue coloured army uniforms and wore a red band bearing the symbol of 'Swastika' (a symbol of Aryan identity). The bodyguards of a Nazi Leader were dressed in black and wore a symbol of the skull. They were always prepared to liquidate the opponents of the Nazi Party.

Hitler, the Supremo : The Nazi Party had gradually begun to attain supremacy in Germany. In order to rescue the German masses from the global depression, the Nazi Party promised 'work and bread to everyone'. In the general elections of 1930 & 1932 A.D., the Nazi Party emerged as a powerful party. Next year when the coalition Government was formed, Hitler became the Prime Minister. President Hindenburg died in 1934 A.D. At that time,

instead of holding the Presidential elections, Hitler himself became the President. And with this, the German Republic came to an end and dictatorship was established in Germany.

Ideology of Nazism : On assuming power, Hitler adopted the 'One Party, One People, One Leader' ideal of Nazism. The Nazi Party gave 'unlimited, total and all embracing and supreme power', to the dictator. The dictator was known as the 'Fuhrer'. The will of the Fuhrer was law and his verdict justice. Constraints were put on the Fundamental rights of the citizens. Hitler had strongly declared that 'the Germans were the only pure Aryans in the entire world and they were born to rule the world'. In order to ensure that the German people strictly followed the principles of Nazism, it was included in the curriculum of the educational institutions. 'The textbooks' said Hitler, 'is our leader and we love him'. They committed the gruesome and inhuman act of suffocating 60 lakh Jews in Gas Chambers. The German leaders adopted the principle of - 'Germany is there, where Germans are' and this led to Second World War.

Internal Achievements of Nazism : Hitler lent dignity and prestige to the German government within a short time by establishing a strong administrative set-up. He created the vast state of Greater Germany. He adopted the policy of opposition towards the Jewish people and advocated the supremacy of the German race. He adopted a new economic policy and brought prosperity to Germany. He began efforts for the eradication of unemployment. He started constructing public buildings, providing irrigation facilities, building railways, roads and production of war materials. He made untiring efforts to make Germany self-reliant within one decade. Hitler discarded the Treaty of Versailles by calling it just 'a piece of paper' and stopped paying the war penalty. He instilled the spirit of adventure in the common people, but in doing so he led Germany to extreme nationalism and caused the Second World War.

Japan's contact with the West

Until 1853 A.D., Japan was isolated from the rest of the world. Japan had no contact with any nation of the world. In 1853 A.D., an American Naval Commander, Commodore Perry, came to Japan for establishing trade relations with that country. Having come to realize the military power of America, Japan for the first time entered into a Trade Agreement with it. Thereafter it made treaties with England, Russia and Holland. After this, trade and commerce flourished in Japan. Along with industrial development, Japan turned its attention towards improving its position in the world.

Militarism : In Europe, the dictators of Italy and Germany had adopted the policy of expansion. At that time, Japan too advanced on the path of expansion of its territories. Japan had increased its military capability. The army and the navy were modernized. It secured a third position after England and America as a naval power. Several factories and industries were set up

for the production of war equipment. Military officers occupied important posts in the politics of Japan. The military was at the base of Japanese politics. Even the masses began to look upon the military with honour and respect. By creating a huge military force, Japan increased its influence over the World.

In 1905 A.D., Japan defeated Russia, a giant of a nation. The result of this war created a tremendous impact on the European nations and the whole of Asia. Japan proved to the world, that a nation could attain prosperity and power by advancing on the paths of knowledge and science. At the time of the First World War in 1914 A.D., the Japanese Prime Minister adopted the policy of expansion. In the First World War, Japan joined hands with the Allies. During the war, it established its regime in many parts of the world. But, it had to give up these territories according to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Consequently, great discontent prevailed amongst the army men. Japan strengthened its military power again and began acquiring newer territories. In 1927 A.D., Prime Minister Baron Tanaka prepared a plan for expansion and implemented it.

The Progress of United States of America

At that time, an important change had occurred in the world. The influence of the European countries was diminishing and the United States of America was becoming increasingly important. After the First World War, America became a strong nation economically as well as militarily. It played a significant role in the formulation of the post war treaty. Many countries of Europe had become weak economically during the post-war period. On the other hand America had prospered economically. Within a period of 10 years, the picture changed. In 1929-30 A.D. the Great Depression began in America and it swiftly spread throughout the world. With the closure of industries in America, thousands of workers were rendered unemployed. The economic depression had an extremely adverse effect on the American Economic System. The American President Franklin D. Roosevelt, elected in 1933 A.D., took great pains to improve the economic condition of the country. Owing to his efforts, the economy was stabilized. Consequently, America could retain its position as a powerful nation in the world.

The Rise of Nationalism in Asia and Africa

At the end of the First World War, there was an awakening among the people of Asia and Africa and they had started struggles for independence. The countries of Asia and Africa had co-operated with the Allies during the War. In return for this, they hoped to be granted Independence or at least additional rights. But, after the war, there was no change in the policies adopted by the English and the French towards their colonies. As a result, these countries of Asia and Africa intensified their struggles for freedom. These struggles for independence were not successful immediately. But the intensity of the struggles led to a gradual reduction in colonial supremacy.

After the Second World War, these countries were successful in securing their independence.

Certain countries in Asia were under British domination and some under the French domination. Our country was under the British rule. At that time, national movements began in our country also under the leadership of Gandhiji, the Father of our Nation.

A Revolution had taken place in China in 1911 A.D. i.e. before the First World War. A republican government was set up. This revolution had taken place, so as to free China from the influence of foreign powers and for establishing unity within the country. Yet, in spite of growing nationalism, the Republican Government failed to establish its power over the whole of China. And after a prolonged struggle, the communist government was formed.

Afghanistan, our neighbouring country fought an armed war against England and gained independence. Both, Russia and England were ruling Iran. But, after the Russian Revolution, Russia withdrew its troops from Iran. Hence, a struggle against England began in Iran. At last, Iran attained independence in 1925 A.D. England and France had established their control over Arab countries, because of rich mineral oil resources possessed by the Arab nations.

The national awakening had begun in Africa also. Many organizations had been established for this purpose. For the first time, the National Congress was formed in 1912 A.D. in South Africa. The national awakening which had begun in Asia and Africa, was an important event of that time. The masses which had been ruled by others for a long time, had started becoming aware of their rights.

Efforts for the Expansion of Territories

After 1930 A.D., serious efforts were made to expand territories. The dictators of Italy and Germany nurtured the ambition of expanding their territories. Japan too was ready for imperialist expansion. All the three nations, in their own way, began efforts to acquire more and more lands. These three nations combined against communism. When the attacks began, the leaders of Soviet Russia and other world leaders decided to face them collectively. But the differences in the ideologies of communism and democracy, led to the failure of these efforts. The campaign for expansion was first started by Japan.

Before the First World War, Japan had acquired some territories. The region of Manchuria located in China was specially favourable to Japan for its industrial development. This region was rich in mineral resources. Japan established the South Manchurian Railway Company in Manchuria for building railways. It made conscious efforts to establish its rule while administering the railways. In order to obtain more benefits from this land, it invaded it in 1931 A.D. Within a short period it obtained total control over the region. Thereafter, it took aggressive steps to capture other territories.

belonging to China. At that time, America, England and France did not oppose Japanese expansionist activities. They wished for the weakening of China and Russia. England believed that if Japan were engaged in the conflict with China and Russia, England would be free from the threat posed by Japan to its empire in Asia.

By merging newly acquired regions with Italy, Mussolini expanded the Italian empire. He invaded the island of Rhodes in Greece and acquired it. Thereafter he acquired the port of Rijeka (Fiume) by an agreement with Yugoslavia. In 1935 A.D., he declared war on East Africa in order to secure 'Abyssinia' (Ethiopia). Within a year, it acquired this region. Later, he made the small state of Albania, situated on the coast of the Adriatic sea its debtor by providing it financial aid. Ultimately, after sometime he acquired this region. Thus, he strengthened his power in the Mediterranean sea region.

In 1931 A.D., the Republican form of government was established in Spain. This brought Italy and Germany closer. The parties opposing dictatorship formed an organization and formed the government. Italy and Germany supported the forces which were in favour of dictatorship. Although, England and France did not help the democratic forces, they received good support from the people of the world who wanted that democracy should survive in Spain. Although dictatorship was successful in dislodging the Republican government, people throughout the world endeavoured to keep democracy alive in Spain.

In order to build a vast German Empire, Hitler adopted a strong aggressive policy. At first, he tried to conquer his motherland Austria. Germans were in a good number in Austria. The ideology of Nazism was quite popular there. In 1938 A.D., after entering into an agreement with Italy, Germany forcibly conquered this country.

For the development of German industries, Sudetanland in Czechoslovakia was very important. Since, the majority of the people living there were Germans, Hitler advanced his claim on it. Hence, the British and the French Prime Ministers met Hitler and Mussolini in Munich. They accepted Hitler's terms without the consent of Czechoslovakia. This treaty is known as The Treaty of Munich. He soon conquered the entire region of Czechoslovakia.

The democratic countries were eager to restrain the policy of expansion of the dictatorial powers from the very beginning. Russia had suggested the formation of a strong organization for this purpose. But, England and France wished to create a conflict between Russian Communism and the dictatorial forces. It was clear from the Munich Treaty, that England and France had adopted a policy favourable towards Germans. At that time, Russia entered into a Non-Aggression Treaty with Germans. Germany invaded the port of Danzing situated on the coast of the Baltic sea in Poland. Hence England and France gave a call to protect Poland's independence, and the Second World War broke out.

The End of dictatorship : In their greed of expanding the territories, Hitler and Mussolini adopted an aggressive policy. Consequently, the Second

World War broke out. In the beginning the dictators were victorious, but later on they were defeated. The Italians imprisoned Mussolini and shot him dead. Hitler is believed to have committed suicide. The tragic end of Fascism and Nazism came much more speedily than its development.

Inaction of the League of Nations

According to the Treaty of Versailles (1919 A.D.), the League of Nations was established in 1920 A.D. The main objective of the League of Nations was the maintenance of the territorial integrity of all the nations. On this front, however, the performance of the League of Nations was poor on account of the selfish interests of the Big Powers. The leading members of the League of Nations were individually powerful, but they failed to co-operate in the task of maintaining world peace. The League of Nations remained inactive and failed to take effective measures during several world events that threatened world peace. The following are some of the examples of the inaction of the League of Nations.

China requested the League of Nations to remove the Japanese aggression on her territory. When the resolution ordering Japan to withdraw its armies from the occupied territories was introduced, Japan used its power of 'Veto' and the resolution could not be passed. When the League of Nations pronounced Japan the 'aggressor' nation, Japan resigned its membership of the League of Nations. The League of Nations proved to be helpless.

Both Italy and Abyssinia (Ethiopia) were members of the League of Nations. When Italy invaded Abyssinia, that country lodged a complaint with the League of Nations. But France wanted to have Italy on her side in her conflict with Germany. Hence it delayed any action by the League of Nations. Italy continued its aggression because its objective was to acquire the whole of Abyssinia. Italy was unanimously pronounced to be the 'aggressor' nation by the League of Nations, but Italy did not pay any heed to it. It conquered the entire region of Abyssinia and, following in the footsteps of Japan, resigned from the membership of the League of Nations the very next year. The League of Nations did not take any effective measures against this 'flagrant violation of the resolutions of the League. The prestige of the League of Nations received a severe blow.

Ignoring the existence of the League of Nations, Germany took several aggressive measures. It captured the territories of Austria and Czechoslovakia. It stopped paying the instalments of the war penalties imposed on it under the Treaty of Versailles. It once again equipped its armed forces with arms and weapons. On all these occasions, the League of Nations remained inactive.

America had made an important contribution in the formation of the League of Nations, but it did not join the organization. Therefore, when America started creating obstacles in the establishment of world peace, the League of Nations failed to restrain America. Moreover, the League of

Nations failed in her task of stopping the arms race and prevent military groups from being formed. The narrow selfish interests of the Big Powers and formation of powerful military blocs outside the control of the League of Nations led to the inaction on the part of the League of Nations.

EXERCISE

1. Answer the following questions :
 1. Describe the chief characteristics of Nazism.
 2. Explain the political changes in Europe after the First World War.
 3. Describe the factors responsible for the rise of Fascism in Italy.
 4. Describe the special features of the Fascist ideology.
 5. Compare the internal achievements of Fascism and Nazism.
 6. Describe the factors responsible for the rise of Nazism.
 7. Explain the imperialist policy adopted by Italy and Germany.
 8. In which instances was the League of Nations inactive ? Why ?
2. Give historical reasons :
 1. Narrowminded Nationalism grew in Germany.
 2. Hitler made efforts to make Germany self-reliant.
 3. Japan adopted Militarism.
 4. The economic depression weakened the American economy.
 5. Japan invaded Manchuria.
 6. There was an awakening for acquiring independence among Asian countries.
3. Write short notes on :
 1. Mussolini's contribution towards the rise of Fascism.
 2. Hitler's contribution towards the rise of Nazism.
 3. Characteristics of a member of the Nazi Party.
 4. Munich Treaty.

Activities :

(1) Prepare a list of the historical events included in this chapter and arrange them in a chronological order. (2) Find out more information about Hitler and Mussolini from your library. (3) Arrange a debate on 'Democracy and Communism'.

The Second World War is the darkest chapter in the history of mankind's existence on this earth. The Second World War was the bloodiest, most destructive and terrible war fought on the battleground of Europe and on many other fronts in the world. Barely twenty years had passed after the end of the First World War, when in 1939 A.D. the world was brought on the brink of the Second World War. The League of Nations which was formed at the end of the First World War with the object of maintaining a permanent peace in the world and preventing any future war failed in carrying out its responsibility. Consequently, the whole world was enwrapped by the flames of another war which affected the lives of the majority of the people in this world. This was a war totally different from the First World War. It spread into cities, villages, forests and deserts. The whole world became a vast war-front. Nearly two crore and twenty lakh people died in the war. Along with a number of cities in Europe, Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan were burnt to ashes or razed to the dust. Nearly one lakh innocent persons were burnt alive in the two cities. The dictators of some countries in the world became crazy and their minds were possessed by the thoughts of barbaric wars. As a result of their madness, the whole world turned into a battlefield for six long years. As a matter of fact, the seeds of the Second World War were sown by the Treaty of Versailles which was signed at the end of the First World War as if the end of First World War was the beginning of the Second World War. The period between 1919 A.D. and 1939 A.D. was a period of 'uneasy peace'. Many important incidents occurred during those twenty years which prepared the background of the Second World War.

Factors which led to the Second World War

Militant Nationalism : The nationalism in Germany, Italy and Japan was marked by extremist militancy. A feeling of vengeance, fanaticism and hatred had taken root in the minds of the people of those countries. Rank injustice was done to Germany in the Treaty of Versailles. Italy also had been insulted. As a result, Mussolini's Fascist Party in Italy and Hitler's Nazi Party in Germany, with a view to capturing and retaining power in their countries aroused narrow, militant nationalistic sentiments among the people and pursued their imperialist policies. On the other hand, Japan believed in the principle, 'Asia for Asians'. Germany was proud of her racial superiority while Italy's dream was to turn the Mediterranean Sea into the Sea of Italy. As a result, the atmosphere of collective security, which was created in Europe by the various treaties and alliances between European nations, was destroyed. The belief that 'might is right' convinced the nations of Europe that war was the only way to the establishment of supremacy over other nations.

Imperialism : Compared to England, France and America, Germany, Japan and Italy were small nations. So the latter countries pursued imperialist policies and tried to expand their territories. Japan captured Manchuria in 1931